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Panel to look into youth affairs

Izatun Hanim Shari

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said today the Rakan Muda programme would be revived to implement programmes that could benefit youths in the present time.

He said a Cabinet Committee on Youth Development, to be chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would be set up soon to look into the matter.

"We have tried the Rakan Muda programme for 10 years now. It's time for us to audit, relook at it and inject new ideas," he said after flagging off the Kuala Lumpur International Towerthon at KL Tower.

According to him, the committee would involve various Ministries and government agencies.

The newly-elected Umno Youth chief said the Ministry would look at the mechanism to implement youth development programmes.

"For instance, we will look at how Rakan Muda can be best implemented with the involvement of various Ministries and agencies," he said.

He said further discussions would be held with officials from his Ministry and representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Entrepreneur Development, National Unity and Social Development as well as Rural Development.

"Probably, this is the final chance to promote Rakan Muda so that the programme will reach the targetted group and help resolve youth problems of today."

"We have realised that youth development cannot be seen as an effort to be done by us alone," he added.

Hishammuddin said he had thought of the idea of forming the committee for quite some time.

He said he had proposed the formation of the Cabinet Committee to the Prime Minister after youth development issues were raised by several delegates during the debate of the just-concluded Umno general assembly.

"The Prime Minister's agreeing to chair the committee means a lot and it shows his willingness and seriousness in dealing with youth development in the country."

"It is up to the Prime Minister when it will be set up," he said, adding that the committee would help a lot in planning the future direction of youths in the country.

Hishammuddin welcomed proposals on programmes that could benefit youths.

"We are willing to provide allocation for such programmes."

He also said the Youth Consultation Council which was established in 1972 would also be revived to acknowledge and recognise its function as the highest national youth policy-making body.

"The council, whose members include government representatives, student bodies, non-governmental organisations and the Opposition, has not been very active."

Hishammuddin hailed Dr Mahathir's call to Government and Umno leaders not to be too dependent on Government staff to explain to the people on the current government policies.

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